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## JAPAN'S ATTITUDE TO CHRISTIANITY

The question is being asked by students of Missions and all lovers of the great Cause—"What is the attitude of the Government as well as the people of Japan toward Christianity?" This question is one of more than ordinary interest to the missionary since it affects not only the country of Japan, but also has to do with the whole problem of the Christianization of Korea, and to a marked degree the work in China and Manchuria. In the *Japan Advertiser*, published in Tokyo, under date of January 19th, 1912, appeared the following article:

"The Japanese authorities have for many years been erecting barricades against Occidental thought and devoting their efforts towards instilling in the people feelings of loyalty and patriotism. Lately, however, they appear to have begun to give thought to the religious side of popular education, and the Home Department Authorities, according to the vernacular press, have now announced their intention of arranging a general meeting of representatives of the three leading religions in Japan, viz., Shintoism, Buddhism and Christianity with a view to furthering its ideas.

"Mr. Tokonami, the Vice-Minister, representing the Department, has made a statement to the effect that their primary aim is to bring religion into closer relations with the State and so to raise a God fearing sentiment among the people. The cult of national morality, he explains, cannot be advanced except by the co-operative working of education and religion. Thus far education has had no relation with religion. Education by itself cannot keep the people in touch with sacred things—God, Buddha and Heaven—which inspire sublime and righteous thoughts in man. Without such

aid there can be no firm basis for national morality. Therefore, it is a necessity to have religion more closely united with the State.

## THE POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY

"The second aim of the Department, says the Vice-Minister, is to make the three religions more familiar and let them contribute their influence to the general progress of society. Japan has for long had intercourse with the foreign Powers and proved herself capable of assimilating their worldly thoughts and ideals. Considerable progress has been made with the two present religions and Japan ought to make greater headway with Christianity which has already been established in the land many years.

"It could be well, the Vice-Minister is reported to have said, if Christianity could be propagated more widely. It is necessary for its upholders to end the seclusion with which they seem still to persist in surrounding themselves. Some one, the Vice-Minister continues, would object that the three religions in drawing together would lose their characteristics. But, he argued, Christianity whether in Europe or in America is Christianity all the same, though in America it becomes an American Christianity, in England it becomes an English Christianity and in Germany a German Christianity. Though, therefore, Buddhism should go abroad and Christianity be naturalized in Japan, there would be no need to fear lest either should lose its characteristics. It was earnestly to be wished, the Vice-Minister is reported as saying, that the thoughts and faiths of Japan and of Europe should be in such a manner blended."

In numerous subsequent issues, and also in the *Japan Mail* of the latter part of

January, were many articles bearing on this same subject. A missionary of more than twenty years' standing writes regarding this whole matter:

"This new attitude of the Government is most important. It is a complete somersault from the position of the Government toward religion in the last two decades. Hitherto it has said religion was unnecessary, and education apart from religion was sufficient for the Japanese, but this recent promulgation is really an acknowledgment that it has been wrong and it now asserts that the two must go together. All the rest about amalgamation of Buddhism, Shinto and Christianity we do not need to pay any attention to, and in any affiliations that may be made, there will be no attempt to combine in doctrine, but in works; and in such combinations Christianity will always be the gainer. This really means that Christianity has won its way to the top, and that is to sway the affairs of the nation, while Buddhism and Shinto gradually retire and fade away into nothingness. It can't be done in a day, but watch the next ten years."

Another method of testing the attitude of the Japanese people is found in what took place at Osaka on January 15th, 1912. A great fire destroyed more than 5,000 houses in Osaka and rendered some 20,000 people homeless. The matter of relief was an immediate necessity. Some three years ago another great fire occurred, and in administering relief considerable financial irregularity was discovered among those who conducted it. At that same fire, the Christians of the city acting through the Y. M. C. A. assisted in relieving certain districts. The work was done so carefully and wisely that this time when the Christians offered to help, the officials jumped at the chance and placed the matter of investi-

gation entirely in their hands. Several tens of thousands of yen were left over from the relief money of three years ago and it only remained to discover who was needy and render the assistance. The Christians have accepted the responsibility and all the churches have appointed committees who meet each morning at the Association building, divide into groups of two or three, and go out on their work of mercy. They report upon each family who was burned out, their condition, and what form of relief should be given and then give them a card which will entitle them to go to the local office and receive the necessary aid. It will require a good deal of time, which the Christians are gladly giving, but it means a lot to be known as a body that can be looked to and trusted in such a time of distress, and for the performance of such an important and Christ-like work.

Last year the Emperor of Japan gave one million and a half yen for the poor. This money was spent in alleviating the sufferings of the sick, especially providing medical attendance for thousands who were not able to pay for that boon. The Cabinet proposed to the nation that the Emperor's gift should be made the nucleus of a much larger fund to be raised for the endowment of the object aimed at by the Emperor's generosity. During the year, chiefly through the donations of wealthy men, but mingled with these were many small gifts from the common people, the fund has increased to the princely sum of almost 25,000,000 yen as announced at the close of the year, 1911. A missionary writes regarding this remarkable gift:

"This, of course, was the work of unbelievers, real heathen, some would term them, at any rate of non-Christian Japanese, and yet many Americans think this

people are rotten to the core—'wounds, bruises and putrifying sores from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.' I think we are right, however, in ascribing such efforts as these to the indirect influence of the Man of Nazareth, who first introduced real charity upon the earth. His influence is leavening the people of Japan.

One of our missionaries called upon a prominent Buddhist priest in his vicinity, and talked freely to him of Christianity. After quite an extended conversation, the priest remarked with much feeling and earnestness—"Sir, I believe in your God, the God whom you Christians preach, and I also worship Him." It is not difficult to believe there are many such among the priesthood even, and that while keeping up the forms of the old religions for manifest reasons down deep in their hearts they have heard the call of Him who is the eternal light that lighteth every man."

The same missionary relates that he called upon a Shinto priest, who had a New Testament which he brought out as they were talking together. The missionary in looking through it noticed that every word of the Sermon on the Mount was heavily underlined, and the appearance of the pages indicated frequent use. This Bible of ours is found in the most unexpected places, is influencing all sorts and conditions of men and we are only waiting the day when these secret disciples shall come to the Light.

Up in northern Japan the Presbyterians were dedicating a church. The mayor of the city was invited and made an address. In the course of his remarks he said: "Our country is much behind in spiritual matters. We need not only education but religion to form our national character. Christianity is one of the great religions of the world, and one that is accomplishing much." Not

being himself a Christian, he did not know its teachings fully, but he had been much impressed by the power of the Cross. IN HOC SIGNO VINCIMUS.

The recent fire at Osaka burnt out a large section of one of the prostitute quarters. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which has a strong branch here, at once seized upon this as an opportunity to wipe this evil out of existence, and called a great mass meeting to stir up the fires of opposition to granting them permission to rebuild. The best speakers were put upon the platform before a huge audience of 5,000 people, and a half dozen or more burning addresses were made by prominent Christian men, including a member of parliament, a newspaper editor, a lawyer and a Salvation Army Colonel. Also two ladies spoke, one being Mrs. Yajuma, Principal of our Joshi Gakuin, who came from Tokyo for the purpose. Following these a vote was taken calling upon the Governor and Mayor to refuse to license, which must now be asked for again. At the time of the former fire another of these quarters was burnt out, and the women took the matter up in a similar way and succeeded in abolishing the business and doubtless they will succeed in this also. Intelligent men and women, even though not Christian, know the evil of this business, and its hurtful influence upon society, but they have not the initiative or courage to undertake a campaign. But when the Christians start it, they are very willing to give it their endorsement. The newspapers are all on the side of the Christians in this movement, and are joining in dealing sledge hammer blows at the head of Satan, which we hope will be crushed under the heel of Him whose is the promise. This is one of the forces that is at work for the re-creation of Japan.



In order to set clearly before the friends of Missions all the forces at work in Japan, we give a quotation from a Tokyo newspaper of January 23rd, 1912. It is as follows:

### RAT WORSHIP

"Since the outbreak of the first case of plague in Tokyo in December, 1902, the number of rats which have been purchased at the Metropolitan Police Board for the purpose of preventing the spread of the infection has reached fifteen million. The Board will conduct service for the spirits of the rats at Takiwaden, a restaurant at Uyenno Park at five o'clock this afternoon since the rat is the symbol for the current year." Notice that it says, "the *Board* will conduct" and "the *spirits* of the rats." Transmigration! Ancestor worship! And in high places!\*

### SPIRIT WORSHIP

Another example. A few days ago while alighting from a finely upholstered and equipped electric street car, passing in front of a large temple in Tokyo, we saw a man and woman ride up in a new auto, enter the temple yard and proceed to the special shrine where the spirits of soldiers killed in battle are worshipped. They made deep obeisance, gave money to the treasury, prayed a long time and departed in their modern machine.

In the same city where the rats are worshipped, and men and women ride in new auto cars from worship to the spirits of those fallen in battle, is a great Girls' school, the Joshi Gakuin. The forces at work there we believe are helping mightily to change the lives of thousands of Japanese. We are indebted to Miss Isabelle Mae

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\*The picture on the cover shows where the service was held.

Ward, a teacher in the school, for giving us one of the signs of the times in the new Japan:

"The work in and connected with our school of two hundred and fifty girls consists for the missionary teachers of class room teaching in English from the "a-b's" of the entering class through eight classes to the Bible, Literature, Church History and Christian Evidences of the Senior class. Our school has a thorough course in Japanese subjects taught by Japanese teachers. Over ninety of the girls take piano or organ lessons each week and all study singing. The relatives and friends of the girls must be welcomed and entertained when they come to visit or to inquire, homes must be visited (and here just at present we feel our greatest need of help for we have time and strength to visit only a small part of the homes open to us and where Christian work might be done with great directness), prayer meetings for the girls and for their sisters, mothers and cousins must be planned for and attended. The girls of the upper classes who teach in sixteen Sunday Schools in various parts of the city must be helped and advised, and those Sunday Schools visited and helped in some cases. Christmas, commencement, various literary and other entertainments must be provided for during the year, and many other things done to make our school so attractive that it will draw the best girls.

Not quite half of the girls live in the dormitories, and the missionaries responsible for them must be mother, nurse, adviser and friend. The buildings must be looked after and kept in repair in all details, and this requires much time and patience in a country where machines and tools are still so simple that what could easily be done by one man in a day in America often requires a week of pottering by several workmen

here. A door needed? The carpenter is called and in a few days comes to see what is wanted. To-morrow he sends a workman to measure. A few days later number three comes and puts in the frame, nails a few boards over the opening at night and goes home well satisfied with his job. Next week numbers four and five come and get ready for hinges and locks. Two days later the door is hung *on trial*. Next day it is remedied and really hung. Sunday intervenes as the missionary refuses to have workmen around that day. Monday knobs are put on, Tuesday is one of the many national holidays, Wednesday the door is painted. All done? No, indeed—another week for mending the plaster, fixing the lock so it will really lock and stopping up the crack or half an inch left at the bottom of the door in the fitting, and then—all will be well till next winter when the whole thing will have shrunk enough probably to put a good half-inch of new board all around and a pound or so of putty into the cracks of the panels and a block under the lock to make the catch *catch*. Once a lady said to a workman, "Carpenter San, Isn't that *green* wood which you are using?" The reply: "Yes, Teacher, this is *perfectly* green wood." Then great surprise that all was not well.

We have ten graduating from the higher department of our school this spring, and all but one have been baptized. That one seems very near indeed to making a profession of her faith in Christ, for she often leads in prayer and is a faithful Bible student. A few more than one-third of the girls in school are church members, the proportion increasing among the higher classes as very few in the entering class each year come as Christians. It is beautiful to watch the girls develop and their lives broaden, even their bodies losing the

stooped shoulders, narrow chest and continual subservient bending which mark the old idea of beauty in women; but best of all is to see the conduct change, the formal politeness not giving place to but being fulfilled by really loving relations with their companions and the Christ Spirit taking charge in the life of one then another during the year. In a visit to a non-Christian school a short time ago I could not help comparing the faces there with those of "our girls" and noting the absence of something which at the time I could not define. Scholarship was just as good, desire for excellence just as great, but the bright, sweet trustfulness of our girls was not there. This shows more plainly, perhaps, among a people most of whom still have no heart knowledge of our Savior.

#### A VISIT TO A HOME

A pupil longs to have her mother and teacher meet or the teacher asks to call. Permission is obtained and "teacher" is invited for an afternoon. The mother at first is filled with apprehension as to how to treat that unknown quantity, the *queer foreigner*, so as not to offend and yet not be persuaded to listen to any doctrine not inherited from her ancestors. The teacher gets over the necessary stiff social part of the visit as best she can with all its bows, apologies and forms, shows interest in giving a good report of the daughter in school, asks about the other children in the family, drinks several cups of tea, eats the cakes, all in her most friendly way, plays a little rabbit or mouse handkerchief game with tiny sister, and the mother sees the wall of differences disappearing and realizes that her guest is only a friendly woman after all and melts to the longing for friendship. Then some good little seed may be quietly dropped. An invitation is given to repeat

the call and the mother is urged to come to see us and to attend some of our meetings. She is shy and hesitates to take a step so entirely new and liable to be criticized or laughed at by her friends. After several calls she comes and then the real opportunity comes, or rather begins. She *cannot* be *preached to* and then left to herself. Her old customs and forms of worship and friends would crowd in and choke the little seed for it was sown on untilled ground. She must be visited and invited and encouraged and led on again and again. The little seed needs careful cultivation, and unless watched, may be blown away, or overgrown even after starting into life. Yes, it is work, continual and diplomatic, but it pays and gives more of real love and joy than any other. The little ones in that home finally come to Sunday School with some curiosity at first and then with delight, big sister in our school is allowed to be baptized though she had been refused permission by her parents for a long time. The mother sees the changed daughter and herself wants the good *influence* which made that change, may get her husband interested enough to allow a prayer meeting to be held in their home and at last himself attend church. *Five years later* it is a Christian home. It took time and was worth it. Such calls in a hundred homes after four or five hours in the school room, looking after dormitories, our own housekeeping and other routine work, make full days, and, oh! *the number we cannot go to!*"

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